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ABSTRACT

This discussion is intended as a general introduction to communicative language teaching. The text is divided into six parts dealing with the reasons for communicative language teaching, the background to it, learning to communicate, classroom activities, the role of the teacher, and ways to get the method started. Part One examines the nature of communication, the need for learning forms and use, appropriate register, and interactive skills. The background section reviews methods of teaching languages, discusses the kind of teaching to be provided, and the principles on which communicative language teaching is based. The third chapter addresses the issues of meaning, form and content. The section on classroom activities outlines a variety of activities along with the part they play in a communicative approach. Chapter five defines the role of the teacher in the communicative situation as that of counselor or consultant. The final chapter suggests the need to explore the principles of communicative language teaching in a variety of classroom settings as well as the need for empirical research. (AMH)

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ED215558

Communicative Language Teaching: Principles and Practice

Janice Yalden

Language and Literacy Series

General Editors

Jim Cummins
Sharon Lapkin
Merrill Swain

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Foreword

Discussions on "language across the curriculum" have become commonplace among educators since the publication of the Bullock Report *A Language for Life* (London, HMSO, 1975) in 1975. The central argument of the Bullock Report – that the teaching of language should be integrated with all aspects of the school curriculum – is now widely accepted, and many teachers, principals, and administrators are currently working to develop and implement school language policies.

However, the phenomenon of language, which seems relatively straightforward when we take it for granted and just use it, becomes enormously complex when we begin to analyse it in depth and probe the relationships between what are generally regarded as its component parts, that is, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For example, most educators assume that a good basis in "oral language" is necessary for successful initial reading; yet research findings on this issue are not entirely consistent, some showing strong relationships between reading and oral language skills, while others find only weak relationships. The reason for this, of course, is that the term "oral language" can encompass a bewildering array of different skills whose interrelationships are anything but clear. For example, how is the grammatical accuracy of speech related to appropriateness of use in different contexts, or range of vocabulary related to fluency?

The relationships between reading and writing are no more clear than those between "oral language" and reading, with educational theorists and researchers proposing several different views. While the four broad language skills are obviously interrelated in some ways, there are other ways in which they are clearly independent; for example, knowing how to speak does not guarantee that a child will be successful in acquiring reading and writing skills. What this implies for educators is that without a clear conception of the nature of "language proficiency," and the ways in which its component parts are related to each other, it becomes extremely difficult to formulate a coherent policy on how language should be integrated with other aspects of the curriculum.

Issues related to language and literacy become even murkier when we add concerns about second-language acquisition and first-language maintenance among both children from linguistic minorities as well as those from the majority language group. As a result

of considerable research during the past two decades we can be reasonably confident about some educational generalizations in regard to second-language programs. For example, we know that French immersion programs are considerably more effective in promoting French skills than traditional French-as-a-second-language programs. However, when we probe beneath the surface of these research studies, we are faced with the same issues that remain largely unresolved in first-language pedagogy. For example, the question of how long it takes an immigrant child to learn English, which has obvious policy implications both for the provision of ESL services and for psychological assessment, depends upon what we mean by "learning English." Understanding *why* immersion programs succeed in developing second-language skills so much more rapidly than traditional second-language programs involves understanding the nature of language and how it is acquired in first-language contexts.

The aim of the present series is to assist educators (including parents) to explore these issues concerning the nature and development of language and literacy. We hope not only to provide information in a straightforward and accessible form, but also to stimulate ideas and discussion about how the information or "facts" are related to each other and how they can be explained. In other words, we hope to stimulate the process of developing and refining theory because "facts" become relevant for both policy and practice only when they are integrated within a coherent theoretical framework.

All educational policy and practice is based on theory. Often, however, these theories are implicit, or are based on assumptions whose validity is questionable. One of the reasons for this is that researchers publish their findings in scholarly journals in a language that can often be understood only by other researchers. Practitioners are therefore largely excluded from access to these findings. Consequently, and appropriately, they base their practice on assumptions and intuitions derived from experience. However, implicit theories or assumptions unsupported by data are usually not sufficient to persuade others that changes in policy or practice are desirable. Information that can be generalized is required. Such information can serve either to confirm assumptions and intuitions or alternatively to cause them to be questioned.

Thus, we hope that the present series of monographs will contribute to the generation of new theoretical ideas and practical applications in the general areas of language and literacy. Although each monograph is devoted to a specific issue, we anticipate that collectively they will help define the dimensions of language and literacy in both bilingual and monolingual contexts.

Jim Cummins
Sharon Lapkin
Merrill Swain
Series Editors

Preface

This handbook, as part of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education's new series on language and literacy, is intended as a general introduction to Communicative Language Teaching. It is addressed to teachers and educators and also to learners and their families. It is a discussion intended to lead into the very extensive literature on areas related to the topic. It is my hope that it will serve to interest its readers in the potential inherent in the movement to communicative teaching, and in participating (receptively or productively, or both) in that movement.

I would like to thank Trudy O'Brien, Carleton University, who gave her permission to include her Role Plays (page 20) and the exercise on Shopping at Miracle Mart (page 24); Joyce Pagurek, Carleton University, for permission for the Teacher/Student situation (page 21); Heidi MacLean, Bank of Canada, for "Supersonic Planes" (page 25). Figures 2, 3, and 4 were done by Marshall Robinson. Jane Hugo provided research support. To all of these individuals, to the editorial committee, and to my husband for his keen editorial eye, my most sincere thanks for their assistance with this project.

Janice Yalden

1

Why "Communicative" Language Teaching?

The reader's first thought on picking up this handbook might well be why something called "Communicative" Language Teaching is worth writing about in so many pages. All newer methods of second language teaching emphasize the spoken language: if learners are not learning how to communicate, it is often thought that the wrong method is being used (too much concentration on written language, or on memorizing grammar rules), or that there is not enough time for language study, or that positive attitudes are lacking. Since there have been many advances in our knowledge about second language learning and teaching, one might wonder what is to be gained from discussing yet another approach to the question.

It is indeed the case that many important changes have taken place in this field. But there is always room for improvement and we know that while great efforts have been made to enrich second language teaching, there are still too many students who complain that they never have learned "to really use the language", even though they may have had a lot of oral work in the classroom while they were studying it. So there are still problems with the methodologies we use, and there are still large numbers of people (children and adults) who need to learn second languages. In fact, there will always be a demand for sound approaches to language teaching, and therefore it is necessary that our ongoing attention be directed to work in this area, and that we continue to devote our best efforts to providing superior opportunities for language learners. Let us look at the problem from a somewhat different perspective then, and see what we can come up with that will improve the situation further still.

Communication

Perhaps we should start by examining what goes on when we try to communicate with someone else, in order to understand why the methods and approaches which have been available until recently are being called into question. It is clear enough that there are many differences between the spoken and the written varieties of languages and

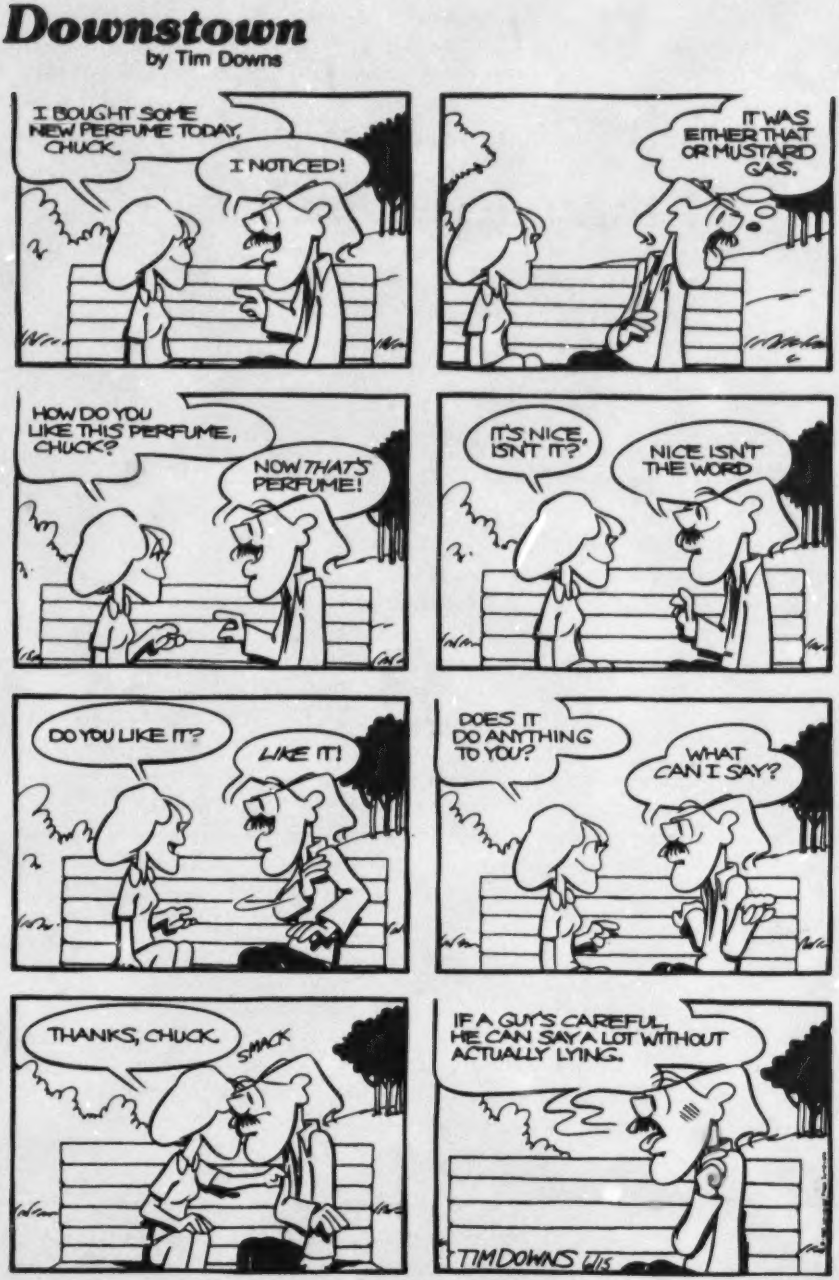
Downstown
by Tim Downs
I BOUGHT SOME NEW PERFUME TODAY, CHUCK.
I NOTICED!
IT WAS EITHER THAT OR MUSTARD GAS.
HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS PERFUME, CHUCK?
NOW THAT'S PERFUME!
IT'S NICE, ISN'T IT?
NICE ISN'T THE WORD
DO YOU LIKE IT?
LIKE IT!
DOES IT DO ANYTHING TO YOU?
WHAT CAN I SAY?
THANKS, CHUCK.
SMACK
IF A GUY'S CAREFUL, HE CAN SAY A LOT WITHOUT ACTUALLY LYING.
TIM DOWNS '15

Figure 1 Communication

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that this fact *has* been taken into account in our teaching. However, whether we speak or we write, I think we will all agree that when we are actively engaged in the act of communication, of getting something across to an audience (even if – or especially if – it is an audience of one), there are a good many things on our minds other than what verb tense to use next. So much depends on the topic we are talking or writing about, why we want to talk about it at all, the relationship we have to our audience, and whether we want this to remain the same or to change it in some way. Furthermore, we may be trying to accomplish something in particular: we may be trying to be persuasive, or to complain, or to excuse ourselves, or to imply something without actually saying it, and so on. We do all of this spontaneously in our native tongue, and it does not seem unusual; although sometimes it can be difficult to find just the right words to do what we want to do. But in fact, familiar as the process is, it is the result of long practice in acquiring two aspects of our language: the ability to construct utterances in it, and the enormously important skill of matching these utterances to a particular social need.

Let us take as an example of this skill in communicating the matter of making requests. We have all sometimes hesitated over just the right way to ask someone to do something. Should we say "Take this to the post office on your way to lunch"? Or should we try "Would you mind very much dropping this off at the post office when you have a minute"? Or would a simple "Post Office – this afternoon" be sufficient? Just how polite or impolite do we want to be, anyway? And we have all, presumably, had the experience of choosing the wrong way of making a request and having it backfire, sometimes painfully. The same thing can happen in making an apology, or a plea, or in any number of attempts at communicating. Similarly, when we learn a second language (unless we learn it very young, in which case it is like acquiring two first languages) we need to perform two related functions: acquire the *forms* of the language (the proper pronunciation, as many vocabulary items as we can, and as advanced a command of the grammar as we can manage); and learn how to *use* the second language to carry out certain acts that we are accustomed to performing in our first language. There are certain sets of social rules that operate to determine what is in fact appropriate in a given situation; gaining knowledge of these rules, as well as learning the linguistic forms and how to put them together, is really what we need to do.

Appropriate "Register" or Level

The difficulty for most people lies in matching the two kinds of knowledge. One may know the grammar and vocabulary of a language fairly well but still be unable to begin and end a telephone conversation appropriately. As a matter of fact, the telephone is the bugbear of most beginning learners if they have to use it in the language they are learning. Other typical problem areas are how to excuse oneself from other people's company without embarrassment, how to express pleasure, or how to make sure your listeners understand you are uncertain about something. These sorts of acts are very familiar when we carry them out in our own language, and we also know how to vary our language according to whether we are in an everyday social situation, or at our place of work, or trying to get some work done on our house or at the service station. But putting all this together in a second language is for many people an intimidating

task, quite apart from the difficulty of watching the genders of adjectives and nouns or the persons and numbers of verbs. Since we know that using the wrong tone or "register" in our own language can cause problems or even make people laugh at us, we are only too well aware that we may be using new language forms inappropriately.

We have a great many uses for languages and, whether we think about it much or not, each of them requires the use of different sets of linguistic forms. The learning of specialized vocabularies goes a long way in a second language situation to help meet special needs, but there is more to it than that. It is also very much a question of specific ways in which we can employ the vocabulary and the grammatical system of the language to convey exactly the nuance of meaning that we feel is needed at a given moment. At a movie, we might turn to a relative seated next to us as the film starts, say "Do shut up!", and expect them to comply with our request. But if someone behind us, whom we do not know, is talking in a similar situation, we will probably start by giving them black looks. If that doesn't work, we will probably say something as polite as "I wonder if you would mind being quiet now", unless we want to provoke a fight with stronger language. There are numerous social rules of this kind, coupled with a complex grammatical system and a seemingly endless vocabulary in any language one might wish to learn. And while a lot of thought has gone into a good many methods of teaching languages to date, most of them have concentrated on only *one* of the two aspects of language we have been discussing: the linguistic forms. The other aspect, skill in social interaction, has been largely ignored until recently.

Interactive Skills

That is not to say that it has never been taught – it has. Language courses have always, for example, included some lessons on standard greetings, farewells, and other types of expressions which we need to get started in learning to use a second language. But they have seldom gone much further than that. The skills we need for effective interaction with others have been neither systematically nor completely treated in the second language teaching programs in our educational system. In our teaching we would like to feel that the learners will eventually be able to use the language to do exactly the things they do in their first language: get an idea across to others, make their attitudes and feelings about something known, present a convincing argument, and so on, all in a set of rather unpredictable circumstances.

These interactive skills include the ability to listen for all the layers of meaning someone may be trying to communicate, as well as noting whether the verbs are in the imperfect or the simple past. In fact this is an especially crucial skill for someone who is learning a second language, and a lot of current research points to the need to devote some time early in the language learning process to a "listening period" – Nord (1980) even refers to "listening fluency", and Leeson (1975), writing about "fluent verbal behavior", shows how speaking and listening are two sides of the same coin. The same can be said of reading and writing: these are also interactive skills, even though one or more of the participants is absent at a given time. But in reading, we have to interact with the writer of the text in that we try to interpret his or her intentions; similarly, in writing, we try to anticipate any difficulties our readers may have by arranging form and content in an appropriate way.

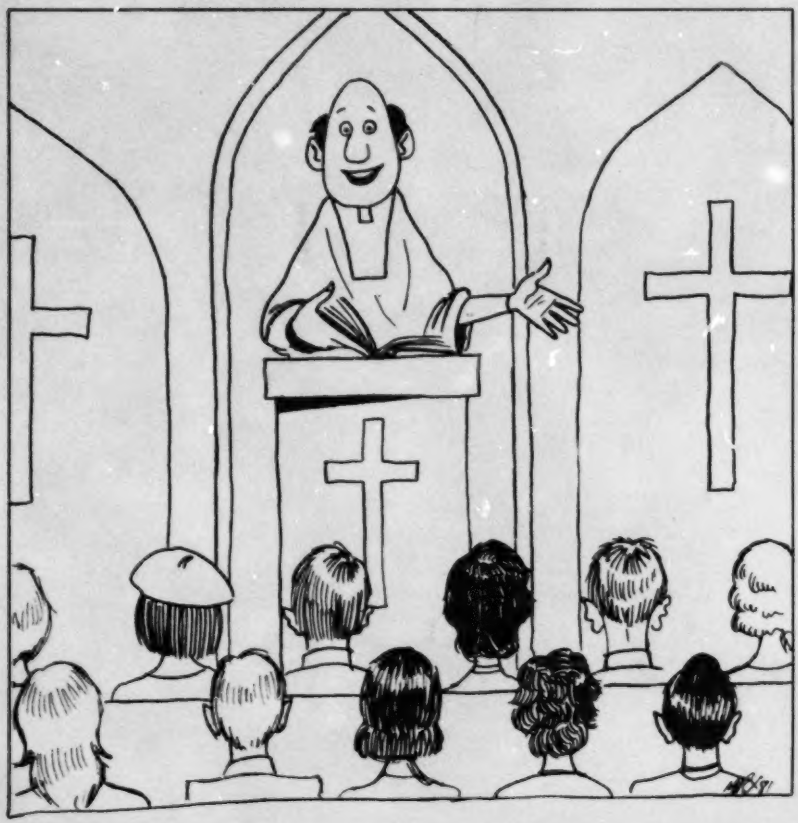


Figure 2 Wrong register

Let it be said that interactive skills are truly the aims of second language teaching. In fact, the learner seldom gets a chance to use the target language in these ways in class; it has been felt that the student must be patient and first of all learn the language as if it were a body of knowledge, like any other subject. It is as though language were considered to be a sort of package of linguistic forms, which the teacher and the textbook writers know all about, and which they are prepared to pass on to the learner, piece by piece. When enough of the package is mastered, the learner can start communicating – *but* cannot expect this to happen too soon. Furthermore, we have been expecting all our students to gain more or less equal mastery of the whole package we

Figure 3 Mastering a language

present to them. We make some concessions to the rate at which they may learn the pieces of the whole package; but learn them all they must, if they are to be said to have "mastered the language".

What I want to discuss in the rest of this handbook is whether it makes sense to continue in this way, or whether there is not another option open to us: a communicative approach to language teaching. In this approach, language is viewed not only as a body of knowledge about sounds, vocabulary, and grammar, a body which speakers possess in common (at least to a degree), but also very much as an instrument for *inter*personal communication, for a whole range of purposes and in a wide variety of situations (many of which are quite unpredictable). This is a view of language which, it seems to me, has the potential to enrich greatly the language learning experiences we can provide in our educational systems. If this is so, how can we approach the problem of teaching second languages? What would we have to do to make sure that students receive some practice in using all the necessary skills, especially basic knowledge of what the social rules in French or Japanese or Ukrainian or Italian or any other language are?

2

The Background

Before going on to discuss the kind of teaching we can now provide and the principles on which communicative language teaching is based, I would like to begin by reviewing in slightly more detail the way we have been thinking about language teaching and learning until now. Then perhaps it will be quite easy to see how Communicative Language Teaching differs from what has gone before it, as well as to see why it is certainly the most promising approach we can use in our educational systems.

For a long time – since the early '50s, anyway – second language teachers, educators, parents, and learners have been very much preoccupied by the idea of "method". We have heard a great deal about various methods since the search for one that would be as foolproof as possible began with the need to teach the rapidly expanding school population in the postwar period. In the '50s, just after World War II, and on into the '60s, the school population grew enormously, new teachers poured into the educational system, and there was a widespread search for ways to cope with the education of such large numbers of students. At the same time, it was generally agreed that the tried and true methods of the past were not necessarily what were best for the modern, technologically oriented period we were entering. This was certainly true in second language teaching, or the teaching of "moderns" as it was then (and still is, to some extent) known.

Before the war, "moderns" meant French, German, and, in certain schools, Spanish. These languages were taught in more or less the same way as the classical languages had traditionally been taught for more than a hundred years in Ontario – through a careful study of grammar and through comparison with English, that is, through the use of translation as the chief exercise in the classroom. The main aim of this teaching was to impart a reading knowledge of the language being learned. It was felt that it was not really possible to teach pupils to speak a new language in a classroom and that, in any case, if they ever went to France or Germany or Spain, they would be able to "pick up" the language on the spot. The Grammar-Translation Method was time-honored, and many, many Canadians learned their languages in this fashion. The mental discipline of

memorizing conjugations and declensions, of parsing sentences, of translating into and out of English, was believed to be an extremely good one. At the same time, the languages in question were representative of the great literary cultures of Europe, so that the ability to read the literature of France, Germany, and Spain was the ultimate goal of the instructional approaches of the time, even though many pupils never in fact got much past the basic grammar of these languages.

The Politics of Need

During and after the World War II, there was growing dissatisfaction with this very academic approach to second languages. There were much larger numbers of students to be taught, and there was a new and urgent need for a rapid and effective method of teaching languages, because the objectives of the grammar-translation approach were no longer in keeping with the needs of the pupils or the desires of their parents. In North America, the growth of linguistic science and the rise of behaviorist theories of learning had combined to produce the major competitor to the Grammar-Translation Method: the now famous Audio-Lingual (A-L) Method. This method sprang originally from the efforts made during World War II by linguists to teach languages which were very seldom, if ever, taught in the schools at all; they suddenly had to be taught to servicemen going into both the European and the Pacific areas of combat. These servicemen needed languages for very different reasons from the ones that had served before as the bases of second language teaching in the schools. They did not have time to acquire the kind of knowledge that would have enabled them to read works of literature in the languages they were studying. Their primary need was for the spoken language. If they needed a reading and writing knowledge at all, it was of the ordinary, everyday language that they would have to use in situations arising out of military life in territories in which they were posted, and in the civil control they would have to exercise in occupied areas. They also needed to acquire this kind of knowledge as quickly as they could; and an effort was made to select those who had the highest aptitude for language learning, insofar as this could be determined.

This situation gave rise to intensive language teaching in schools run by the army, here and in the USA. The classes were run by linguists, men and women with a scientifice interest in describing the languages of the world as they are today, as well as in tracing the history of these languages. The linguists devised a way of teaching the soldiers languages, such as Thai and Japanese, so that they would be able to understand what they heard right from the beginning, rather than acquiring a reading knowledge first and *then* learning to understand the spoken language. They did this by bringing a "native informant" (someone who spoke the language as a native) into the classroom to talk to the students, to enable the soldiers to listen to the target language. Thus the soldiers would get some practice in talking with someone who really spoke the language, instead of having their knowledge confined to books only. To be sure, they also learned something about the grammar (or structure, as linguists sometimes prefer to call it) of the language; but the goal was rapid command of the spoken language of the day.

Because the soldiers who were receiving this kind of training had a real and urgent need to learn the languages they were being taught, and because they were spending

long hours in language training, the results were quite spectacular when compared with the training that students in our schools had been getting. They became headline news. After the war was over, when life began to return to normal, parents wanted something different for their children in terms of language teaching. They, as well as teachers and educators, wanted to know whether the army methods could be used in the schools on a large scale. They wanted their children to learn to actually speak and understand modern languages so that they could use these languages when they travelled (opportunities for these activities would increase with the advent of air travel). Another hope was that the peoples of the world would be better able to communicate with each other and thereby be able to avoid the disaster of global warfare again. Attempts were made to adapt the methods used in the military schools; and, because the school boards could hardly be expected to provide both trained linguists and native informants for each and every language class, the textbook and the tape recorder were used in their stead.

Behaviorist Theory

The new textbooks that were produced were based on a different kind of "grammar", one that linguists use to describe the languages of the Americas (in case they died out before the advance of English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese). These textbooks were also based on a different kind of theory about language learning: behavioristic theory, and in particular the work of B. F. Skinner. This is not the place for a discussion of the work that psychologists like Skinner were doing or to recount the details of the famous studies carried out on the behavior of rats and pigeons in developing behavioristic theory. But it can be briefly noted that Skinner attempted to generalize findings from his work with the behavior of animals to the behavior of human beings. His experimental animals learned to respond in certain predictable ways to positive and negative stimuli such as food or electric shocks. When Skinner and other researchers who agreed with his theories wrote about human language, account was only taken of its physical manifestations. Only language that was *outwardly observable* was considered significant. The cognitive and emotional processes that cannot be directly observed, but only guessed at from overt "verbal behavior" (that is, spoken or written language), were completely set aside. In second language learning and teaching this meant that, especially in the early stages of learning a language, *automatic* responses to certain carefully selected verbal stimuli or cues were to be carefully cultivated. The teacher was required to make sure that the student learned the correct "behavior"; the teacher was not required to know how the student thought about what he or she was doing.

Audio-Lingual Method

This whole approach produced a view of language learning that was really quite far removed from that of language study as a mental discipline related to the study of logic. It meant that we were to view second language learning as basically a mechanical process of habit formation. And so, if language was acquired as a set of new "habits", it would have to be taught by providing the right kind of stimuli (cues given by the teacher) and having the students perform the responses. If the students provided the

right response, they would be immediately rewarded by being told that they were right; if not, they would have to repeat the response until they eventually got it right – and then they would go on to the next piece of language in the package. This kind of behavioristic conditioning in language teaching, combined with the new ways of describing languages, produced for the classroom an approach that was very different indeed from grammar and translation. While the exercises that the pupils did were based on a very careful study of the structure of the language being taught, the pupils were taught very little, if anything, about it. They were to be primarily concerned with repeating over and over the "basic sentence patterns" of the language until they "internalized" them. An enormous amount of repetition would be necessary to accomplish this aim, more than the classroom teacher could provide. It was at this point that the tape recorder came to the rescue. Banks of these tape recorders were installed in booths, with earphones for the students to listen to stimuli or cues on tape and to listen to their own voices played back to them individually. Thus was the language laboratory born, and high hopes were held for this contribution of modern technology to the field of second language teaching and learning.

The Audio-Lingual Method has changed somewhat since the '50s, but its basic principles are still the rule in many classrooms. Language laboratories have not always been available in our schools, but the pattern practice drill remains the chief exercise and the memorization of dialogues goes on. The language learned is, happily, not the stilted, nineteenth-century variety; it is the contemporary spoken variety, or at least it is as close to it as the writers of textbooks feel they want to come. Unfortunately, large-scale research into the use of audio-lingual teaching has not shown it to have fulfilled its initial promise. Progress has turned out to be quite slow with this method, especially when classes are large, there are no labs, and only a short time is devoted to language study each week. Students who received this kind of training, while initially somewhat superior in the acquisition of skill in speaking and understanding, failed to continue to improve more rapidly than students trained with grammar-translation techniques. Skill in reading and writing in the target language was certainly no better – in fact, in many studies they appeared to come out on the short end of the stick. Furthermore, though they sometimes claimed to be "better motivated" by the audio-lingual approach, students often ended up being bored with the need to comply with the large amount of repetitive drill on which the method depends. Many teachers who were dissatisfied with the exclusion of grammar and translation from the classroom therefore began to reintroduce some of each, in spite of the admonitions of the upholders of A-L orthodoxy. Faith in the "pure" A-L approach has in fact faltered among teachers, and a more eclectic approach to second language teaching has gained considerable ground. Nevertheless, we still read accounts in the press which insist that language learning is a simple matter of putting on some headphones and repeating basic phrases over and over.

Audio-Visual Structuro-Global Method

At the same time as the Audio-Lingual Method was being developed in Canada and the U.S., the Audio-Visual Structuro-Global Method (AVSG) was created in France, and for similar reasons. It was felt that a scientific, systematic method for teaching French

was going to be needed in the postwar world and so linguists there set about creating one. This method was also based on the premise that the spoken language had to precede the written one for the learner. The language taught was the everyday variety, based on very careful counts (carried out on scientific principles) of the frequency with which certain words and forms appear. It differed from the A-L Method in that heavy reliance was placed on the association the learner would make between the *sounds* of the new language and *images* projected on a screen at the same time. Hence the "visual" in the title. While there are technical differences between the A-L and the AVSG methods, they have many features in common (notably the teaching of the oral language first, exclusion of the native language from the classroom, and a large amount of repetitive drill). They are both clearly radical departures from the Grammar-Translation Method. That they have failed to produce truly efficient and rapid second language learning in the students in our educational systems may be attributable to the conditions under which they have been used as much as to inherent defects in the theories on which they are based. In any case, since they have not been entirely successful, the search has continued. And indeed many new "methods" have been developed, though none so widely known or used in Canada as the Audio-Lingual and the Audio-Visual ones.

Alternatives

Many of the alternative "methods" have in common a very striking evidence of a turnaround in attitude to what language learning is. Some of them have been created by people who are not linguists at all, but psychologists or educators interested in learning in general and in second language learning in a secondary way. These individuals do not believe in a rigid approach to teaching the principles of grammar; instead, they try to find ways to relax the learners, and to make learning pleasant and comfortable, rather than tense or even threatening. Some of the methods I have in mind are Suggestology, created by Dr. Georgi Lozanov of Bulgaria; the Silent Way, created by Caleb Gattegno; and Charles Curran's Community Counselling-Learning. It should be noted that so far these methods have been used mainly with adults, and have not found their way into the school systems, although some teachers who are acquainted with them may inject certain elements from them into their teaching.

This is, then, the general situation today: in our schools, audio-lingual or audio-visual methodology is generally in use, perhaps with some overt teaching of grammar, though with very little translation. In the teaching of adults, in addition to the A-L and A-V methods, there is some teaching which harks back to the grammar-translation tradition, as well as one or other of the more "humanistic" methods just referred to, which are found only in certain contexts. All of this does not take account, of course, of the very important switch to immersion teaching of French in primary schools across Canada.

Immersion Teaching

Immersion teaching is a very different thing indeed from the "methods" in use in secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and in adult education. Immersion teaching has much more in common with native tongue teaching as well as with what is known

as Direct Method teaching. The Direct Method represents a tradition which reaches back a long way, but which was displaced in the schools on this continent in the late 18th or early 19th century. It has been around in other guises, however, particularly in many highly successful private language schools. Within this approach, the language taught is the contemporary variety, much as in the others; however, very little if any attention is paid to grammar as such. The instructors prefer to simply initiate conversation with the students, generally beginning with simple reference to objects in the classroom, then moving on to the world around and outside. It is an approach that works when there is a low ratio of students to teacher; and it is an approach which has generally been rejected in Canada as not serious or scientific enough and not suitable to be used in our educational system. It has done well in England in the teaching of English as a Second Language, and there are many books and programs founded on Direct Method principles which have been used in schools in former colonies of Britain over the years. It is, to be fair, used in some adult education classes in Canada, but seems not to be taken seriously when the learners are adolescents or adults, presumably bebecause it is believed that older learners need a more structured approach (whether the traditional one or the Audio-Lingual or Audio-Visual variety). Coupled with this view, of course, has been the view of the adult language learner as someone who is at an almost hopeless disadvantage when compared to the child, since he or she is often believed to have suffered what Dr. Wilder Penfield felt was the atrophy of the ability to learn new languages. And so we continue, on the whole, to view with some scepticism the ability of the adult to progress very far in learning a second language.

Such a view, however, has been very seriously questioned, now and in the past, since there have always been sizeable numbers of adults who have learned second languages quite well – even magnificently! In any case, as we shall see, in many situations it makes no sense simply to give up on everyone over 12 as being unable to tackle a second language. Adults often have to learn – and do. Perhaps, then, something has been missing from our second language instruction. Developments in research and theory now appear to point more and more clearly to what the missing elements may be, and they seem to resemble some of those elements present in the immersion classroom.

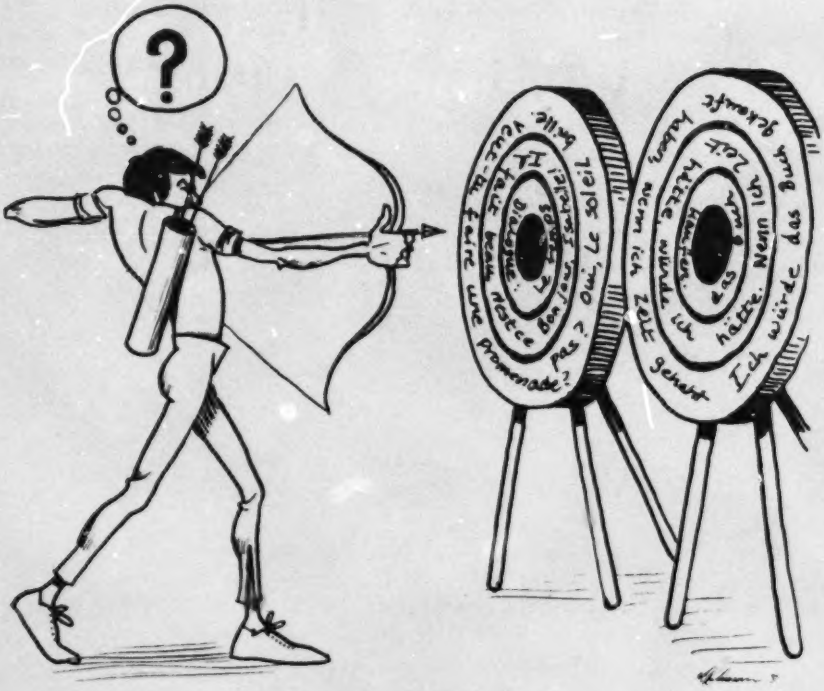
But how can we possibly compare the activities of a roomful of six- or seven-year-olds to what adolescents and adults need to do to learn a second language? Aren't there basic differences in learning abilities, let alone needs and attitudes, that would make it difficult to draw such parallels? Of course there are differences, but the similarities may be greater than we thought. Let me now turn to the developments that have brought us to this conclusion, the ways in which we are now looking at how the learner learns, and what teachers can and should be doing to make the acquisition of a second language an easier, more agreeable, less threatening task than it has been in the past – for children, adolescents, and adults alike.

3

Learning to Communicate

When linguists speak of "learning" languages nowadays, they are referring primarily to the trials of the adolescent or adult student, for children are not really considered to be "learners" in the way that others are. Children acquire their first language without any formal instruction, and they can acquire other languages successfully just by coming into contact with them. But generally speaking the adolescent or adult is helped by formal teaching, though we know that some adults learn languages without it, and others, even if they have it, do not learn very successfully. That is, formal teaching appears to be beneficial – but it is neither necessary nor sufficient to enable the student to learn a new language. In discussing language teaching, then, the chief difficulties lie in creating courses for the over-12 group – a rather large part of the population. No wonder this group receives a lot of attention. Furthermore, in all of the history of second language teaching so far, the role of the learner has in some respects been considered a rather passive one.

This is not to say that the learner has not had to do some hard work. Depending on which approach was being used the job has been more or less onerous. The student has always worked under the direction of a teacher, and has expected to be guided, if not driven, towards mastery of the linguistic forms of the target language. Certainly no one has consulted the student about the way in which the language was to be presented in the classroom. More often than not, the student has had very little choice in the matter of a preferred approach or the tasks to be undertaken in order to exercise these strategies. This is not to say that "good" language learners have never struck out on their own – they have. They have generally tried anything and everything to gain the level of mastery they wanted of the target language. But their efforts have generally remained a private affair, something not necessarily discussed with their teacher nor even revealed to him or her. In fact, students sometimes have had to conceal their own solutions to the problems of second language learning for fear of discouragement, if not actually reprimand, by their teachers. Yet the authors of an important study called *The Good Language Learner* suggest now that:


?
Ich hätte das gern gemacht.
Ich würde das gern machen.
Ich wünschte, ich hätte Zeit gehabt.
Ich würde das gern machen, wenn ich Zeit hätte.
Bonjour, Le soir!
Oui, Le soir!
Pas?
Bonjour!
Bonsoir!
Bonsoir!
Bonsoir

Using Language

The support for this view of what a second language learner should be encouraged to do comes in part from work in the study of first and second language acquisition, and in part from a change of direction in the thinking of linguists about what are the most interesting and important features of language. These two currents of research may sometimes mesh, although there remain all sorts of linguists, some working on very abstract theories of what language is all about, and some more inclined to be interested in the applications of linguistic theory to problems of society, including the problem of teaching languages. Among all of them, however, there has been a shift of attention away from the study of linguistic forms and an increasing interest in how people express meaning through language and how they use language to do certain things. Linguists studying the development of language in small children have noticed that, even before they learn to use forms of their native tongue, they use whatever sounds they can to get certain meanings across to the people around them – their parents, usually. The development of "ways of meaning" seems quite systematic, and M. A. K. Halliday has suggested in his work with child language development that children first of all use a set of sound symbols (which they work out with their parents, and which both parties – child and parents – understand very well) to control the actions of the people that are close to them, as much as possible. As children grow, they learn how to use their native tongue to express ideas which they already had, but had to express through some sort of "prelinguistic" means. In other words they learn to *do* things with and through words rather than learning words first and meanings later.

Research in second language acquisition supports the notion of beginning with meaning rather than form. It seems that since linguistic rules and forms are *part* of communicative competence they, along with the many other components of this competence, will be acquired best where language is used as naturally as possible and where the emphasis is on the exchange of interesting and relevant information.

Content and Meaning

In Canada, there has been a large amount of research of various kinds which bears this out. The immersion studies, especially those of late immersion and of situations in which subject courses are actually taught through the second language, all direct attention to the importance of having the learner focus on content and meaning rather than on linguistic form. In his contribution to this handbook series, Cummins provides an account of research into the language acquisition process in minority-language children, which again is of interest and of importance to this discussion. In the USA, many researchers (Schumann, Stevick, Oller, Krashen, all come to mind) have carried out psycholinguistic studies which supply a very strong theoretical rationale for communicative language teaching, and which complement the British and European studies in sociolinguistics. These provide support for the notion of relevant content, and the two currents of thought are now converging in the worldwide movement to change our language teaching philosophy.

What this means for language teaching is that we want to involve the individual, not in thinking about the forms of the new language, but in the *act of communicating*. And that means really communicating about something of interest to the individual learner.

In fact, it may just possibly be that this is what is primarily involved in motivating the student. It may be not so much attitudes toward the language or the culture it represents, but the act of communication itself, that will provide the necessary drive.

We come up, then, with a new recipe for the learner: freedom to use the strategies that suit him or her best plus an environment that encourages the trial of acquired skills – conscious and intuitive – in order to get on with the job of real communication.

MIKE, DO YOU ALWAYS USE NOTES WHEN YOU CALL A GIRL ON THE PHONE?
DON'T YOU?
10-7
WELL, NO, NOT ORDINARILY..
YOU SHOULD TRY IT. I FIND I HAVE A LOT MORE CONFIDENCE IF I'VE WORKED OUT WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY IN ADVANCE.
ALSO, IT FREES ME TO THINK OF SPONTANEOUS STUFF THAT I CAN THEN PEPPER THROUGH THE CONVERSATION.
LIKE WHAT?
OH, BASEBALL SCORES, QUIPS, STUFF FROM THE NEWS – YOU KNOW, LIKE JOHNNY CARSON DOES.
G B Trudeau

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Figure 5 Spontaneous communication

4

Classroom Activities

In trying to respond to the notion of the learner as needing first of all to develop the ability to communicate, we need to look at two aspects of our work in the classroom. We should think first about the content of our courses and then about the kinds of exercises and activities we will use.

Traditionally, although the idea of communication has figured prominently in descriptions of what we wanted our students to learn to do with language, we have not thought about learning – or teaching – languages through communicative techniques; the general idea has been that *first* you learned the language and *then* you could communicate. So the content of a language course has more often than not been defined by making a selection of items from the overall grammar and vocabulary of the target language, and using various techniques and exercises to get the student to learn the necessary items. The key ideas in the approaches we have been using until now have been twofold. First of all, we (teachers and textbook writers) make a selection of items from the overwhelming mass of new language. This selection has been made according to different criteria at different times: sometimes it has been a question of the situations in which the learner would need to use the language; sometimes the frequency with which items appear in the language has been considered more important. The linguistic items and forms expected to cause most difficulty for the learner (either because of their complexity or because they are very different from his or her own language) have also been taken very seriously and whole courses have been built up on these sorts of contrasts. In any case, the point is that course content has been carefully determined prior to the writing of the materials and certainly before the commencement of any lessons. Afterwards it has been linked to topics or themes which it is felt will be of interest to the learners.

In Communicative Language Teaching, while it is not proposed to do away with such specifications, it is intended that work in the classroom should not depend entirely on them. It cannot depend on such specifications, given our assumptions concerning

the independence and role of the learner. The content must, of course, serve the purpose of getting the learner started in communicating, as well as the more familiar task of supplying a body of linguistic knowledge (grammar and vocabulary) which will be used for the purpose of performing the common "speech acts" in the target language. Thus, the content will be organized into units of activity which will encourage communication and also allow the learner to think about and talk about the process of communicating in a second language. These units will not be divided into the kinds of lessons or modules we have known so far, e.g., a lesson on a particular verb tense, or a lesson organized around a theme such as "planning a trip", in which structures and vocabulary are pre-selected by the teacher and drilled in class. Communicative activities or tasks are arranged differently. First of all, there is much less concern with presenting items to be learned in a strict sequence. There is concern with getting the learner involved in tasks or activities which engage all the communicative skills. And by communicative skills, we mean here knowledge of the system of linguistic forms in the new language, ability to select the meanings the learner wants to convey, plus the ability to find the appropriate forms to match the learner's current situation, the speakers involved, the particular point of view to be conveyed, and so on. Let me provide some examples of how these activities will differ from traditional ones.

In a classroom in which the teacher uses the grammar and translation approach, students are first given rules, since they are expected to gain some mental discipline and learn to analyse the new language. The following one, taken from a textbook for Spanish-speaking students of English, will serve as an illustration of a rule on possessive forms of nouns.

> Nouns that end in an -s in the singular add 's if they are of one or two syllables, or of classical origin.

And then some examples are provided: "St. James' church, Charles' book, Cervantes' work". Next there follows an exercise which can be either a translation from Spanish to English, or a "fill-in-the-blank" such as "Can you show me the way to _____ church?" where the student must choose "St. James" from a list of words provided and remember to add the apostrophe. And so it goes, rule by rule, until "all the basic grammar" is set out.

In the audio-lingual approach, because repetition of "basic sentence patterns" to the point of "overlearning" or saturation of the memory was considered desirable, the student would be given few if any rules, and instead asked to practise in this way:

Teacher:	*Student:*
I am looking for the book.	I am looking for the book.
magazine	I am looking for the magazine.
pencil	I am looking for the pencil.
map	I am looking for the map.

Or, as one of the many variants, the drill might assume these forms:

Will you go?	Yes, I will.
May I come in?	Yes, you may.
Can you swim?	Yes, I can.

And woe betide the student who answered "No, I cannot!", even though it was the unvarnished truth. There was no room for the idea of acquiring conscious control of the patterns of a second language within this methodology – it was to be a matter of forming the correct habits.

So we have ended up with two basic approaches to the aims of instruction. There is the *audio-lingual approach*, in which second language learning is considered to be a mechanical process of habit formation, and in which the student had to be led through a series of stimulus-response drills. In these drills, the correct response had to be immediately followed by reinforcement, in the form of having the teacher nod approval or repeat the correct response. And there is the *modified grammar-translation or "eclectic" approach*, in which language learning is viewed as consisting of understanding the rules of a language, and through this understanding, acquiring the ability to produce infinite numbers of sentences, none of which the learner will have ever necessarily heard. In both cases, the goal is mastery of the linguistic forms of the new language, in spite of the very different classroom drills and exercises of which I have given one or two illustrations above.

In Communicative Language Teaching, there is a very great change in attitude to what kinds of activities will help to bring about skill in *both* aspects of communicative competence that I have referred to above. Certainly, skill in producing correct linguistic forms is desirable. At the same time we will want to use activities which will be more truly motivating. If we accept that it is the act of communication which will provide the motivation to practise language, as well as the context in which language may be exercised, we must create exercises and activities which will involve the learner in actively seeking information, making requests, apologizing, describing, giving orders, expressing regrets, and all the other multitude of communicative acts we all engage in every day. It will not matter if the communication is not particularly fluent, not what one writer calls "the rapid-fire exchange of linguistically accurate complete sentences". We aim for the exchange of ideas, however slow and painful, between human beings, and the production of real interaction, not a set of conditioned responses to questions without significance to the learner, nor yet a discussion about the language to be learned.

To achieve this end, a number of types of activities are being used in Communicative Language Teaching now, and more are being introduced all the time. Some of these are:

Role plays	an activity in which students are assigned "personalities", presented with a situation, and learn useful expressions that will help them improvise behavior appropriate to the context of the role play.
Simulations	a type of role play in which the participants are less governed by fictitious roles than they are by the presence of a problem and information needed to reach a solution within a given situation. It is like a protracted role play, but with a more predictable outcome.
Problem-solving	an activity in which information (prepared or spontaneous) is exchanged among students in order to formulate

a solution to a problem. No one student has all the information needed to find the solution. Some examples are: ordering mixed-up paragraphs, matching like drawings, deciding which of the people in a lifeboat will be saved, and so on.

Information transfer — an activity in which information encountered in one form (e.g., a graph) is translated into another form (e.g., a paragraph).

Interactive tasks — any exercise which gets learners working together, whether it is problem-solving or not. An example might be having small groups of learners build constructions from a few index cards and paper clips; you would expect them to discuss the possibilities as they progressed.

Role Plays, Simulations, and Games

Here are examples of some *Role plays* that have been used very successfully in classes for young adults learning English. Similar situations can be prepared to incorporate features of the culture that the target language represents, and the roles can be as simple or as sophisticated as the learners' abilities seem to indicate.

Role Plays to Practise Cause-and-Effect Arguments

1. A civil engineer from a large city wants to build a bridge across a small stream in the country. A local farmer tries to convince him to change the location, because the stream often overflows its banks in the rainy season (although it hasn't in the last three years). The engineer would like to believe the reports he has of the area and build the bridge despite the farmer's information.
2. A travel agent is talking with a young couple. She is trying to talk them into going to _____ for their vacation. She describes the country and what they can expect there. They ask a lot of questions.
3. A young man is unhappy because he feels he must marry the girl his parents have chosen for him. Although the young woman is very nice, he's just not interested in her. Nevertheless, he feels an obligation to his parents. His friend tries to convince him to break off the arrangement.
4. An experienced diplomat is trying to convince the younger, hot-headed government leader that it would be unwise to invade a neighboring country despite some strong criticisms that they have recently received, and even an illegal border crossing by troops. The diplomat mentions limited resources, repercussions, and consequences. The government leader mentions honor, invasion, and integrity.

To prepare the class for this exercise, the teacher might present relevant linguistic structures (as below), but the learners would, in effect, create their own versions of the situation presented to them by the teacher, and would use the language to do what they themselves decided to do in each case.

Structure Vocabulary for Cause-and-Effect Arguments

Suggesting	May / Could } I suggest, recommend, advice, offer a suggestion . . . ?
	Have you thought of . . . ? (v-ing)
	Why don't you . . . ?
	How about . . . ?
	Would(n't) you consider . . . ?
	Let's look at . . . Why don't . . . ?
Cause-and-Effect	If x happens, then y will happen.
	If x happened, then y would happen.
	If . . . then . . .
	As a result of . . .
	Because of . . .
	Unless . . .
	If it weren't for . . . (then) . . . have + past participle
	First, then, after(wards), finally
Opinion	(Personally) I think, believe, feel, doubt that . . .
	In my opinion, you should, ought to, might . . .
	As far as I'm concerned . . .
	If I were you, I'd . . .
	Not everyone would agree with me, but . . .

As an alternative approach to role playing, students may be given only partial information about a situation, and they will then be expected to create a dialogue on the spur of the moment. The teacher might have in mind the following situation:

Teacher/student
The teacher tells a student that he or she rarely hands in homework. The student has just put several assignments on the teacher's desk but the teacher hasn't noticed them yet.

Two role cards are prepared. One is for student A and looks like this:

A: You know, B, this won't do. You very seldom hand in your homework.
B: ----------
A: ?

The card for Student B will be prepared as follows:

A: ----------
B: But, A, I just put several assignments on your desk.
A: ----------
B: ?

For a *simulation*, a lot more preparation is required. Students are presented with a situation fraught with problems; they are assigned roles to play, and the potential for arriving at a variety of outcomes is quite great. Simulations are generally used for fairly advanced students; they are reminiscent of games like "Diplomacy" or any of the numerous war games on the market.

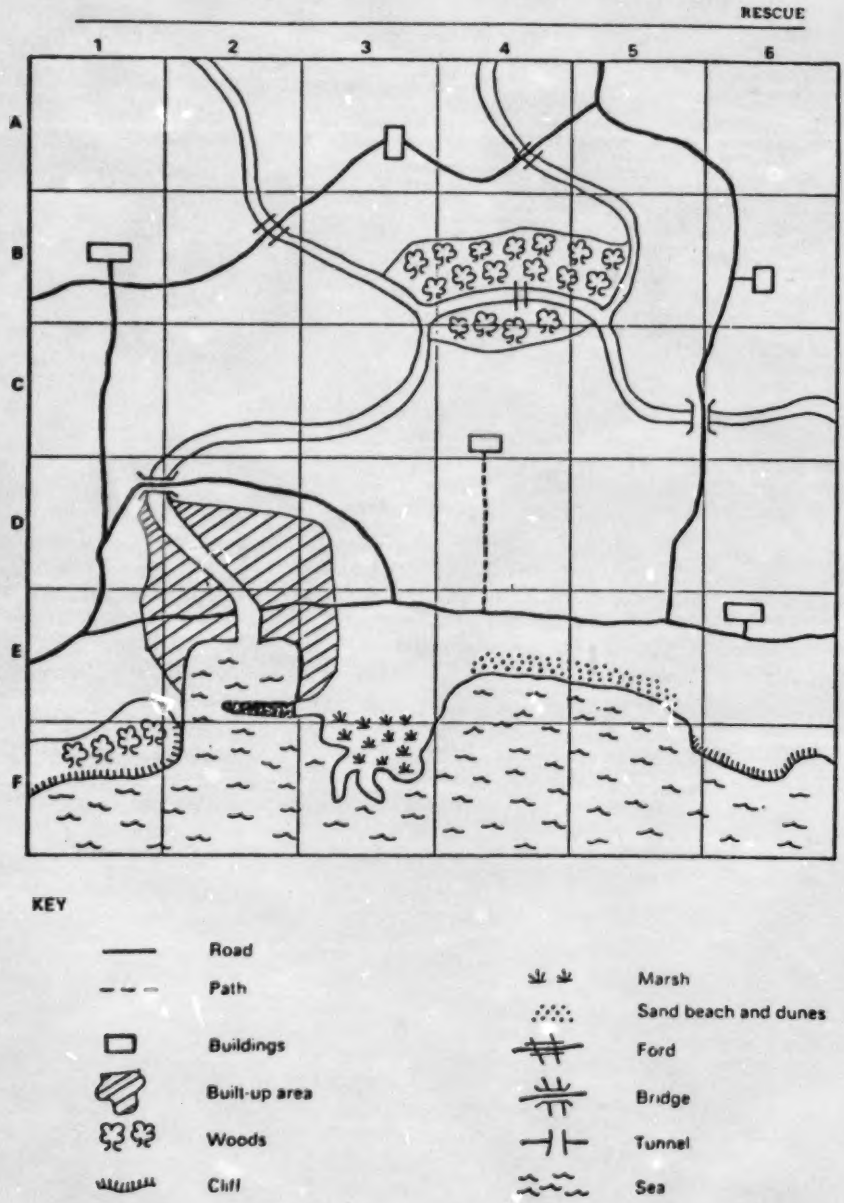


Figure 6 Rescue

Here is a communication *game* which is not as complicated as a simulation because no roles are assigned and only limited data is presented; it is called "Rescue". In it two learners – or "players" – are each given copies of an identical map. Each one is trying to work out the best route for a team of soldiers to take in order to rescue important prisoners held in hostile country. Information supplementary to the map is also available, but is different for each player. This extra information will affect their planning, and its implications will form the basis for much of their discussion. They are told that they have the extra information because the map is more than twenty years old and may not be accurate; thus they will need to check it carefully against their information sheets. One player has information from a recent air reconnaissance of the district; the other has information from secret resistance workers within the district itself.

The teacher will have a copy of the map with all the information drawn in, as well as a suggested escape route. At the end of the "game", or activity, the players – with or without their teacher's help – can use the completed map as a check on their own work. Discussion of the location of the prisoners, the alterations that the map requires to include the new information, and the planning of an escape route will generate a great deal more discussion. It can be seen fairly easily how this sort of game could be turned into a full-scale simulation, by assigning roles to some students as the prisoners, to others as their guards, and to yet another group as the rescuers. Information about the situation and problems concerning it can also be extended and complicated ad infinitum. Simulations can be used to teach the language of adventure, but also, more realistically, the language of business conferences, sales meetings, academic seminars, and, I suppose, even of football huddles. These techniques can be very successful and can get some very lively discussion going, as long as they are chosen and prepared with the personalities of the particular learners very firmly in mind.

Problem-Solving Activities

These are more limited in range than a full-scale simulation. For example, learners might be arranged in twos or threes and each one provided with a scale drawing of the floor plans of a house. The drawings are mounted in a file folder, and each student is to sit so that one side of the folder is held up to screen the floor plan from the other "players". Each learner then gets a package of small pictures, representing household objects. One person is leader and tells the others how the objects are being arranged. They must duplicate the arrangement; at the end, the screens come down, and the arrangements are checked. A variant on this activity is to permit discussion of the placement of each object – a procedure which can prolong the activity considerably.

Unlabelled maps of towns and drawings of the countryside can be used in the same way. The objects to be placed might be cards with the names of buildings on them, e.g., bank, high school, hospital, fire station, department store, etc., and an exercise in town planning is thus carried out along with practice of appropriate language items. These "games" are quite simple to prepare; there are also packages of them available commercially (see the references at the end of the handbook).

All sorts of ordinary materials can be turned to good use in preparing problem-solving activities. Students may, for example, be presented with problems like the ones listed below, to be "solved" with the aid of a department store catalogue.

Shopping at Miracle Mart

a) You are a student who is in Canada for the first time. You need warm clothes for winter to go to school. What items will you need? Your limit is $200.00.

b) You are going to meet your boyfriend's (girlfriend's) grandmother. What new clothes will you buy? Limit $90.00.

c) You are giving a "going away party" for 2 girlfriends. What will you buy? for the party? for them? Your limit is $90.00.

d) You need some things for your new kitchen. What essential items will you buy? What decorative things are possible? Limit: $120.00.

Games like "Eye Twister" can be taken from local newspapers and from collections of puzzles, and can be played with teams made up of several students each, competing with each other to complete the puzzle within a time limit.

Can you find at least 8 differences in the 2 pictures?

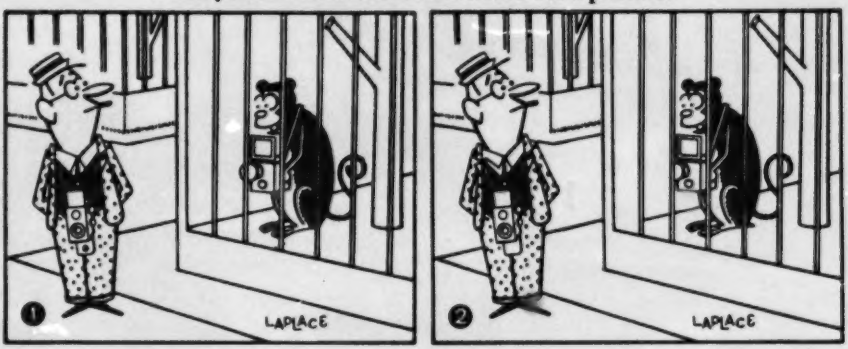


Figure 7 Eye Twister

Once again, it should be noted that these techniques can be used to create quite difficult and sophisticated problems, depending on the kind of material used. Everything from newspapers to textbooks in economics is grist for the mill. A list of sources is included at the end of the handbook, but it is only a partial one – any teacher could extend it enormously.

Information-Transfer Exercises

Information transfer is another activity that requires the student to think, to ask questions, and to get information needed to carry out a task. One activity that fits into this category is called "Describe and Draw" (an invention of Marion Geddes – see the references). The teacher prepares a file folder containing a drawing (which should be slightly unusual for advanced students, but can be quite straightforward if it is for beginners). The teacher pastes instructions like those below on the outside of the folder; he or she can prepare a great many such folders, and students can work on them in pairs at any time.

Describe and Draw
(2 players)

Instructions for Player A

DO NOT OPEN THIS FOLDER UNTIL YOU
HAVE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW:

1. In the folder you will find a picture. DO NOT SHOW THE PICTURE TO PLAYER B.
2. Tell Player B to get a pencil, an eraser, and some paper.
3. Describe the picture to Player B. You may give a general description of the picture first. Tell Player B to draw what you describe. Do not watch Player B. Tell Player B to ask you questions, if necessary.
4. When Player B has finished drawing, show your picture. Compare the 2 pictures and discuss any language difficulties.

A more sophisticated version of this technique would be to provide learners with a chart which has a certain number of blank spaces on it. The teacher then reads a passage out loud, and the student fills in the chart. The passage can also be given to the student to read, if the teacher wants the student to practise reading rather than listening. In both cases, information must be retrieved and recorded accurately by the learner. This kind of exercise is sometimes called information matching; it should be prepared to "fit" the interests of the students who are using it, in order to be properly effective.

There are all sorts of sources for such materials: newspapers, journals, magazines, reports, and so on. Graphs may be presented and the student asked to write out the information contained in them in a paragraph; or he/she might be asked to derive a chart or graph from a text. At a less sophisticated level, restaurant menus make very good sources for information-transfer exercises and problem-solving activities.

Information Transfer: Supersonic Planes

Chart:

Type of Plane:	—	Concorde	TU-144
Origin:	USA	British/French	—
Maximum take-off mass:	340 900 kg	—	150 000 kg
_____:	—	128	—
Length:	—	62 m	60 m
Wing Span:	46 m	—	—
Cruising speed:	—	2160 k/h	2480 k/h

Text:

Supersonic planes have been built in different countries. For example, the TU-144 comes from Russia and the SST is from the United States. The Concorde is the result of a partnership between the British and the French.

There are many differences between the planes. The SST has the largest maximum take-off mass, with 340 000 kg. The Concorde, on the other hand, has a maximum of 175 000 kg and the TU-144 has 150 000 kg. The Concorde can carry 128 passengers in her comfortable cabin. The number of passengers that the Russian plane takes is 120, and the American takes 298 people. The length of the airplanes also varies, from 60 m for the TU-144 to 91.7 m for the American plane. The "wing span" means the distance from the end of one wing to the end of the other. In the SST this is 46 m, in the Concorde 36 m, and in the TU-144 22 m. The last difference between the three planes is in the cruising speed. The Concorde is the slowest, at 2160 k/h, and the SST is the fastest, at 2857 k/h.

Interactive Tasks

One of the most original interactive tasks that I know of is Paul Nation's "Combining Arrangement". In it, all students are actively involved in real communication because each student has some, but not all, of the information necessary for the task at hand. Combining arrangements are different from cooperating arrangements in which all students have the *same* material in front of them, as in the activity involving placing objects in a house.

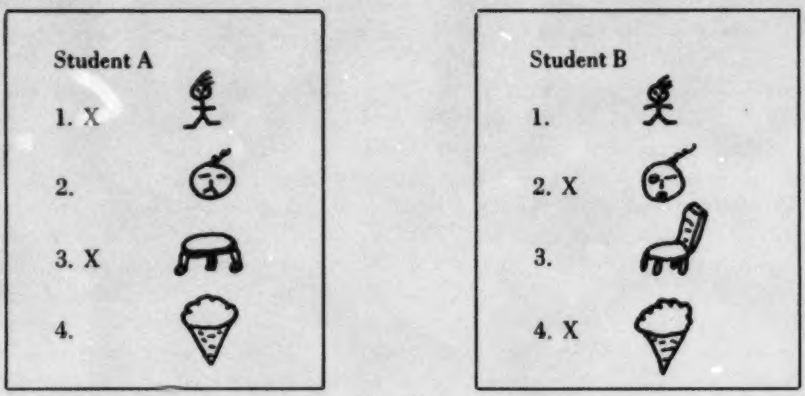
Combining arrangements can be used with all levels of learners and with a variety of materials. The procedure works as follows: Student A and Student B are given a task, e.g., "Examine the information you have and find out how many items are similar." Each student has an information sheet containing either pictures or words or both. The pictures may be as concrete as the ones in our illustration, or they may be simply abstract shapes. A and B sit opposite one another without being able to see each other's sheet. Student A, who has a cross next to item 1, begins by describing the first picture. Student B listens carefully, asks any questions, checks the first picture, and then decides whether the pictures are the same or different. (Both students then write an "S" or "D" next to item 1.) Student B, who has a cross next to item 2, begins the process over again. When all the items are completed, Students A and B compare their sheets to see if their answers are correct.

Although students may make many errors during this activity, as in all of these communicative tasks, Nation reminds teachers that combining arrangements, especially those using pictures, demand much more *creative* language use. Consequently, students will be stretching their language abilities and, given more confidence and practice, these errors should disappear.

The activities, tasks, and exercises outlined above are only some of the communicative techniques that teachers should be encouraged to use in their classrooms. In all of them, there is obviously much less control than previously over the exact linguistic items to be produced – in fact, often no control at all. Instead, there are endless opportunities to use the language as one does in the real world, creatively, unpredictably, in real communication. And we *expect* a lot of conversation to be going on at the same time in the same classroom. Students will talk to one another, rather than responding to the teacher only, whether singly or in chorus. Many of the activities to be used remind one of the immersion classroom, which in turn resembles so much more closely

Examples of Cards for the Combining Arrangement

A. Pictures



B. Minimal Pairs

Student A	Student B
1. X pat	1. fat
2. bin	2. X bin
3. X sack	3. sack
4. wary	4. X very

Figure 8 Combining arrangement (Designed by Jane Hugo)

the ordinary schoolroom than it does the unreal linguistic world of the average second language classroom.

But how can some kind of continuity be provided in the second language classroom? Surely it is not a good idea simply to allow the learners to do whatever they wish, in a helter-skelter kind of arrangement? Won't students lose confidence if they cannot see some sort of patterning to the tasks they have to carry out? Won't it produce chaos in the classroom? There are, in fact, ways to deal with this problem; communicative teaching materials can be given continuity in various fashions. One way is the familiar practice of using a theme which will run through a series of units. By "working over" or successively refining ideas and concepts associated with a given theme, the learner will gradually reach more and more sophisticated levels of linguistic ability.

A series of activities might be planned around a communication problem which could be, for example, how to compare and contrast ideas. The initial activity might

be quite simple; the students might read an ad for dishwashing liquid and note the ways in which contrast and comparison are expressed. Then they might write and draw ads for other things (cars, a pain reliever, a digital watch, peanut butter) with the intention of showing how the brand they want to advertise is superior to any other. Subsequent activities could continue to emphasize the theme of contrast and comparison, but they could become progressively more complex, in terms of the language used (choice of vocabulary, verb tenses, etc.), the ideas expressed, and the subtlety or complexity of the kind of impact the students wish to make. Some examples might be: preparing a speech attacking a political or social issue and showing why those who supported it were wrong, whereas the speaker is right; writing an article for a newspaper on a similar topic; conducting a discussion between two individuals each of whom wanted to present one of two conflicting views, etc. Each of these activities would involve different language skills in different combinations and proportions: reading and writing; writing notes and speaking; writing; speaking. Each skill would be practised in different ways: writing an ad and writing notes for a speech require the use of different styles. Some activities would be solitary, others practised in groups. The complexity of the tasks would increase, but the component of language – forms, ideas, and interpersonal skills – would always be practised in clusters, not singly, and the student would learn by reviewing what is known and adding constantly to it, rather than learning things one at a time.

Of course, this kind of curriculum has no intention of having students all progressing along the same path, all working at the same exercises at the same time. It presupposes that students will take different routes, through a variety of possible activities, to attain their ultimate goal.

Curriculum or Syllabus

The building up of an entire second language curriculum (or syllabus, as British writers prefer to call it) based on a communicative approach can be carried out in various ways. One would be to construct a large number of units on the lines discussed above. In this case, linguistic forms, communicative functions, and the topics or themes included are braided or woven together at all times; the curriculum designer then must keep track of them all and endeavor to ensure that the program includes everything that has been planned. (Maley 1980) Another approach is to concentrate on one thing at a time, *without* omitting any of the components of communicative competence, but varying the focus. Allen (1980) discusses how this may be accomplished by focussing first on structures, next on functions, and finally on subject matter in an ESL curriculum for the secondary level in Ontario. Various other solutions have been proposed or discussed (e.g., Allwright, 1978; Brumfit, 1980; Stern, 1978, 1980; Yalden, 1980, and forthcoming). The solutions proposed often relate to the question of the proportion of formal instruction to functional or experiential learning experiences, and of formal grammar content to relatively unstructured content, that a teaching program should contain. It would appear that often the characteristics of the program play a decisive role in determining the answer to this problem, but the volume of work in this area is increasing, and we can expect to see some interesting reports in the future on this matter.

Evaluation

The business of testing and evaluation in Communicative Language Teaching has, therefore, to be an ongoing process. A communicative curriculum – since it must be based in part on what a given group of learners bring with them to the job of learning – can never be completely and definitely prescribed before a course begins. Certainly the groundwork must be laid; but we will expect a fair degree of variability in what goes on from one class to another, one year to another. The process of evaluating the students must reflect these differences and variations, and it must recognize the variety of routes that students will take. It will have to take into account that communication is based on interaction and thus is creative and also unpredictable. We will, therefore, be concerned with many factors other than accuracy in choice of linguistic items within a restricted context. We will instead want to be able to gauge whether a student can get something done through the use of language, and with what degree of efficiency and appropriateness to a given situation. A later handbook in this series will be devoted to this issue, which also has implications for language program evaluation. A good bibliography has been prepared by Wesche (1981); Canale and Swain have provided a substantial discussion also (1980).

5

The Teacher: Ruler or Peer?

As we have seen in the above discussion, all the work in progress in the investigation of how we acquire a second language points to the product of this process as being the ability to interact communicatively with other people, whether it be through speech or through writing. It is not just a matter of learning language forms, but of learning how to use them appropriately, to achieve the purposes we set for ourselves in these interactions. To provide opportunities for communicative experiences in the classroom obviously means a new range of classroom strategies and activities and I have tried to give an indication of new approaches and procedures in the preceding section. We will also be required now to define afresh the role of the teacher as we already have done for the learner.

The Past

The teacher's role has been fairly clear in the past. At first, it was felt that it was to impart knowledge to the students, whether they liked it or not – and sometimes stern lectures on the virtues of hard work were called for. Plenty of good advice belonging to the moral sphere of human life was offered, and students were often made to feel that it was only laziness and lack of application that stood in their way. Later on, we spoke of the student's lack of aptitude or of motivation, but the teacher still ruled with an iron hand under the audio-lingual approach. The teacher was given very precise instructions, furthermore, on the procedure to be followed in the classroom, since deviation from the correct methodological procedures and lack of constant guidance might allow the students to acquire imperfect language habits. Nelson Brooks put it like this:

> He [the student] is to hear only authentic foreign speech, he is to hear much more than he speaks, he is to speak only on the basis of what he has heard, he is to read only what has

> been spoken, he is to write only what he has read, and he is to analyze – if he does so at all – only what he has heard, spoken, read, written and learned . . . (a) he must not speak English, (b) he must not learn lists of English-foreign language equivalents, and (c) he must not translate from the foreign language into English. All these activities will nullify his efforts to establish within himself a coordinate system of languages, and will instead only collapse the structure into a compound system with English dominant.
> Brooks: 1960.

So, whether the teacher felt it necessary to create the correct habits from which understanding would follow, or that understanding should come first and then learning, it was clear that he or she had a duty to control how much language the students were exposed to and when and how they should practise what they had learned.

The New Teacher

In Communicative Language Teaching, as a result of the redefinition of the learner's job, and of the recognition that the learner needs room in which to work things out independently, the notion of the teacher as director needs to be altered. The teacher is not to be merely the instrument of the expert, who provides a foolproof method which is then implemented in the classroom. Instead, the teacher is to be a counsellor or a consultant. What happens in the classroom will not revolve around him or her any longer – it *must* revolve around the learners and their needs and abilities as individuals. The teacher will not prescribe the language forms that the students use, but will help them to acquire what they need. The teacher will have to learn to react to whatever they bring to the learning situation with them. The teacher will not have the accustomed control over the amount, sequencing, nor frequency of usage of the language items the students either produce or absorb. This probably will demand exceptional alertness and sensitivity in order that the teacher can focus on the learner.

Above all, while the teacher is and will remain essential in our classrooms, he or she will have to relinquish some power. After all, it is possible to learn without being taught. That is to say that students can learn (which is their function as students) without a teacher – but a teacher cannot function without students. And so, while the presence of the teacher will remain indispensable to the creation of an effective learning environment in our schools, it may entail learning to be more useful in terms of what the students need and want, rather than trying to orchestrate closely what goes on inside their heads.

It will be a demanding task, not an easy one, as the teacher attempts to keep up the atmosphere of real and vivid communication in the schoolroom. It will require preparation of much more new material for each class, since it is difficult, if not impossible, in Communicative Language Teaching to rely entirely on textbooks. The teacher must therefore be communicatively competent in the second language in order to be effective, as well as to understand the basic principles of this approach and to be able to produce the kinds of activities which they require. The teacher will learn to use far more unedited, *real* language material than before. Instead of – or as well as – textbooks, we will expect to see materials of all sorts in these classrooms: pamphlets, newspapers, menus, bus schedules, theatre programs, department store catalogues – all of these and many other kinds of authentic materials will help provide real interactive use of the new language.

Correction of Errors – Sensitively

Both teachers and parents (and adult students for that matter) will wish to take a different view of the correction of errors in the classroom. If we want to create an atmosphere in which students can talk (and write) freely, then we cannot be too concerned with the production of error-free sentences all the time. It is possible to take a positive view of errors, if we remember, first, that children make numerous errors when acquiring their first language, and, second, that people make mistakes whenever they are acquiring a new skill of any kind. It is quite true also that people learn from their mistakes when they receive feedback periodically. But this feedback should be supportive, and not aimed at making them feel inadequate and stupid. Errors are very useful to the teacher, furthermore, in telling something about whether the teaching has been effective. If a teacher keeps a sort of "bank" of errors that students have made in the past, this can provide much valuable information for designing remedial work, either for individuals or for whole groups. It can even provide the basis for setting up a whole new course. Therefore, if indeed our aim is to have our students learn to communicate *successfully*, even if somewhat imperfectly, the pedagogical shift must be away from preventing errors and toward learning from them. This is, however, an area in which more research needs to be done before we can answer questions about which errors should be corrected, and how, and even who should do the correcting. Still, it is encouraging to think we may be on the road to finding some more useful way of dealing with a student's composition than covering it with comments in terrifying red ink and handing it back wordlessly.

The Teacher – A Chameleon

The teaching of languages will become more subtle, more sophisticated than ever before. And our teachers, in the words of Peter Strevens who has trained many teachers, and done a lot of teaching himself, must learn to adapt, "chameleonlike", to a large array of variables and factors. This is because we will offer our students not a single approach to language learning, with a limited range of exercises, but a selection from an enormous variety which will best fit their needs and goals. Not all teachers will work with widely varying groups of students; even though our students may come from similar backgrounds and have similar purposes in learning languages, they will never be carbon copies of one another. And so every teacher who is involved in Communicative Language Teaching will need to be something of a chameleon after all.

6

Getting Started

The communicative approach is above all *not* a new "method" which holds itself up as a universal solution to the problems in all language teaching situations in the form of a package of "teacherproof" materials and techniques. It is a point of view, but a principled one, based on a careful study of what human language is, what we know of how it works, and what we use it for, and based also on a careful consideration of the state of our knowledge of how the individual acquires his or her own tongue and also subsequent languages. It is an approach which holds a great deal of promise at a time when some enrichment of our second language teaching programs is being urgently sought. But our past record of enthusiastic acceptance of new methods and our subsequent disillusionment with each in turn should have taught us by now that we ought not to expect miracles. We can certainly be optimistic, however, that so much new ground has been broken, and that there is in fact an alternative to the disappointments of the past.

Tried and True?

While we can look forward to some interesting new work in our second language classrooms, it would also appear prudent not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We ought not to repeat another mistake to which we have been prone, that is, to reject everything in second language teaching that has been practised over the last several decades, simply because there is a fresh alternative in view. We should be willing to retain whatever aspects of more traditional or familiar methods or approaches there are which may still prove useful to us. There are ways of providing instruction in the forms of language which are tried and true, and which we will want to preserve. There are also many new routes to providing communicative practice and encouraging the closest possible thing to real life communicative situations in the classroom. We need now a period of tranquil exploration of the application of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching in a variety of classroom settings. Some empirical research would

clearly be very beneficial to those concerned with planning new courses of study, preparing materials, and training teachers. Of course, the results of such research ought to be conveyed to the public as soon as there is enough of it accumulated to be significant, so that we can judge how best to proceed next in our pursuit of that elusive goal: the "best" way to learn a language – for each one of us.

What to Expect

At the present time, what is needed to get the ball rolling is a concentrated program of information about Communicative Language Teaching: we hope this handbook and others in this series will help to supply some of the background for parents, educators, and students. If this approach is to succeed, it is crucial that everyone involved be aware of what it is all about. Parents need to understand the reasons for changes in forms of instruction and what will be expected from their children. Students – whether young or mature – need to understand that they will have a newly responsible role in helping to define their own goals and purposes and in helping their teachers to identify the most suitable and enjoyable types of learning. Educators are accountable for what they provide to the public, and so must know to what extent and in what situations to encourage the adoption of the communicative approach to language teaching, and how it will fit in with our general approach to education.

For our teachers, we will need to develop better accounts of the techniques to be used in Communicative Language Teaching. They will need complete information on all the types of exercises and activities that have so far been developed, together with suggestions relating these to age levels, levels of students' existing ability in the new language and their general educational background, and to the aims and needs of the students. This information will come in many ways: in re-training programs, in workshops at professional conferences, and in the training of new teachers. It will take many forms: books, of course, which will relate principles to practice; packages of instructional material; audio-visual aids; and all kinds of other communicative activity kits, some as yet unimagined. There is already a large body of such material – what is required is information and resource centres, where interested individuals can get together, look over what is available, and make the choices dictated by their particular situation. Our teachers will also need our whole-hearted support as they set about taking up a new challenge.

The outcome of the successful development of a program to implement, monitor, and evaluate Communicative Language Teaching should be a situation in which second language teaching will no longer be regarded as a "optional extra". It should be possible to integrate the content of our second-language courses much more closely with other subjects in the school curriculum, as part of the search for more authentic, more interesting material for our students to work on. For the adult learner, the close relation of teaching techniques and of the content of language courses to his or her own aims and needs (whether personal or professional) will provide genuine communicative situations. It is these situations and activities which will yield the motivating force necessary to the development of skill in a second language. So it is that a fresh approach to teaching based on the principles outlined in this handbook has appeared: "Communicative" Language Teaching – in a new and very vigorous sense.

Appendix:

Sources of Authentic Material for Classroom Exploitation

Catalogues	university, college mail order
Forms	government private business – (e.g., job applications, payroll deduction forms) order forms banking forms leases insurance forms income tax forms passport forms
Newspapers	headlines stories advertisements want ads cartoons comics graphs letters – (e.g., lonely hearts columns, letters to editors, "action line" columns)
Instructions	clothing labels food packaging "how-to" or "do-it-yourself" items appliance instructions

Maps	city, province, or state, or equivalent local transportation floor plans
Lists	ingredients dictionaries statistics bibliographies indexes atlases helpful hints
Magazines	Match your students' interests
Photographs	
People	use invited guests: people with interesting jobs, life experiences, or important information, if at all possible.
Timetables	train, bus, plane T.V., radio, movie theatre special events
Menus and Recipes	
Pamphlets and Brochures	Every organization, institution, cause, or government agency publishes leaflets and/or pamphlets. For example, booklets describing payroll deductions, company benefits, energy conservation, nutrition, first aid, etc. Travel agencies are an excellent source.
Interoffice memos	employee notice board material directives announcements

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